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ABSTRACT

Following a historical review of Native American educational practices, this book chapter examines various approaches for increasing Native American representation in higher education, presented within the framework of three orientations to curriculum planning. First, Native students may be expected to change to fit the curriculum--to learn the rules and practices of the institution as well as obtain supplemental educational instruction and psychosocial support on their own. This approach relies on Native student assimilation to institutional culture and usually results in the student's culture being viewed as a deficiency. Second, creating culturally congruent curricula involves faculty taking the time to learn about cultural values and concepts and then taking action to integrate these values and concepts into the educational process in a caring fashion. Cultural discontinuity theory can serve as a foundation for this approach. Third, empowering students and communities necessitates correcting the imbalance of power that has kept the voices of Native Americans out of the academic dialogue. The classroom can serve as a forum for challenging social inequalities; the capacity of students to assume teaching and learning roles can be recognized; and universities can involve tribal communities in defining educational needs, developing curricula, and evaluating outcomes. Curricula of higher educational institutions that attend to the needs of all could be powerful catalysts for social change. (Contains 48 references.) (TD)

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Curriculum Planning and Development for Native Americans and Alaska Natives in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT: An historical overview of curriculum development practices provides insights for meeting the educational needs of Native Americans and Alaska Natives who will enroll in higher education institutions in the twenty-first century. Three orientations to curriculum planning for Native peoples are discussed: (1) changing the student to fit the curriculum, (2) creating culturally congruent curricula, and (3) empowering students and communities. The authors see evidence that Native peoples are "once again playing a key role in defining their own educational landscapes and the directions for their [educational] journeys."

For Native Peoples in America, this is a great time to be alive. We are the children of cultural magnificence; the parents of the visions and dreams of our ancestors. We are the modern evidence of our ancient continuums (Harjo, 1994, p. 5).

There is a renewed sense of optimism in Indian country. After decades of being silenced, Indian and Native voices are being heard and their views considered within the postsecondary arena (see, for example, Indian Nations At Risk Task Force, 1990; Native Education Initiative of the Regional Educational Labs, 1995; White House Conference on Indian Education, 1992). Native concerns regarding the educational achievement of their peoples are strengthened as they join with national agendas focused on better preparation of students for citizenship in a culturally diverse society (see, for example, Adams, 1992; Bennett, 1995; Justiz, 1994). While this recent trend represents a significant social force for change, underrepresentation of Native Americans and Alaska Natives in higher education remains a critical issue (U.S. Department of Education, 1998). Only when we address the needs of all peoples in this land will our country be positioned to continually meet the complex challenges of a highly interdependent world.

The curricula of higher educational institutions might serve as powerful catalysts for social change or might perpetuate social inequalities that impede the forward movement of a culturally diverse nation. This article advocates that curriculum planning issues be examined to increase Native American and Alaska Native achievement in higher education. The first section provides a historical review of Native American educational curricula dating back to its roots, bringing it forward through the assimilationist period imposed by the federal government and up to more recent efforts toward self-determination. Following this historical overview, various approaches associated with curriculum development specific to Native Americans and Alaska Natives are discussed.

Information presented is derived from various sources. Due to limitations in available literature specific to Native Americanns and Alaska Natives in higher education, this article draws upon literature addressing elementary, secondary, and postsecondary curriculum development. The review of literature is integrated with research

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completed by the authors as well as personal experiences in designing, implementing, and evaluating educational programs for Native Americans and Alaska Natives in higher education. The goal is to provide the reader with insights into curriculum planning that will be pertinent to the education of college students in the new century.

HISTORICAL REVIEW

Prior to fifteenth-century European contact, higher education was, as it still is, a fundamental part of Native American societies. Contrary to the popular image of Native Americans as uneducated savages, "many of the American Indian peoples devoted their lives and talents to the search and development of knowledge—a practice that arose from the cultural group needs and in part focused on learning how to better provide for the practical well-being of the people" (D-Q University, 1996–97, p. 2). Traditional educational processes were associated with formal higher education institutions (Crum, 1991) and with a "total way of life" (McKay & McKay, 1987, p. 64). Educational curricula focused on facilitating awareness of an individual's relationship to the universe and of one's place in history, as well as on the development of "inner strengths and depth of character" (D-Q University, 1996–97, p. 3). However, with the advent of widespread European colonialism, traditional education systems were severely challenged by multiple forces including: (a) foreign diseases spread by explorers, missionaries, and profiteers which left many of the Native teachers dead; (b) competing philosophies fueled by Eurocentric positioning which disregarded the Native people's ancestral means of educating their citizens; and (c) benign and feigned efforts to morally save the Indian savage more ruthless than altruistic.

Foreign disease brought profound devastation. Snipp (1989) has paralleled the magnitude of Native American depopulation after 1500 to the medieval plagues of Europe. Possessing neither the resistance to European diseases introduced by early explorers nor the cures that were developed to combat the diseases, Native American populations were quickly decimated. Large-scale depopulation created upheaval in existing social and cultural systems, including education, and caused redistribution of entire population centers. As a consequence, what White settlers encountered were often only the remnants of once complex Native civilizations.

White European contact quickly revealed incompatibilities with Native American philosophies and lifestyles. The Native people were viewed as impediments to the country's settlement and westward expansion. Their very existence was further challenged through warfare, genocide, and assimilationist policies. Where the "Indian problem" was not eliminated on the battlefield, it was to be eradicated using education as a tool. It was believed that as Natives learned the ways of the White people, they would willingly give up their own ways to become part of the dominant society (Utley, 1984).

Some of the very first higher education institutions established by the English in this country had chartered missions to educate Native Americans. The charters of Harvard College (1636), the College of William and Mary (1693), and Dartmouth College (1769) all incorporated curricula that were designed to educate and "civilize" Native Americans (Wright & Tierney, 1991). However, this intent was not readily accepted by the Natives themselves. The following reaction of the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy to an offer by the Government of Virginia to enroll their sons at the College of William and Mary exemplifies the Native attitude toward Western education.

> . . . you, who are wise, must know that different Nations have different Conceptions of things and you will therefore not take it amiss, if our Ideas of this kind of Education happen not to be the same as yours. We have had some Experience of it; Several of our young People were formerly brought up at the Colleges of the Northern Provinces; they were instructed in all your Sciences; but, when they came back to us, they were bad Runners, ignorant

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> of every means of living in the Woods, unable to bear either Cold or Hunger, know neither how to build a Cabin, take a Deer, or kill an enemy, spoke our Language imperfectly, were neither fit for Hunters, Warriors, nor Counsellors; they were totally good for nothing. We are however not the less oblig'd by your kind Offer, tho' we decline accepting it; and, to show our grateful Sense of it, if the Gentleman of Virginia will send us a dozen of their Sons, we will take Care of their Education, instruct them in all we know, and make Men of them. (Franklin, 1794, p. 28–29)

While colonial colleges largely failed in their attempts at assimilating Native Americans, the assimilationist philosophy was carried forward to the federally funded, boarding school era beginning in the late 1800s. The target became young children who were considered "ideal agents for uplifting an older generation still stranded in the backwaters of barbarism" (Adams, 1995, p. 335). In contrast to the focus of the colonial college on higher academic study, boarding school curricula emphasized vocational training and domestic arts. To facilitate adoption of White cultural values and knowledge, Native children were removed great distances from their families and tribal surroundings. Use of Native languages was strictly forbidden and subject to corporal punishment (Szasz, 1977). Due to the high transportation costs involved and the objections of families to having their children forcibly removed, on-reservation day schools were eventually established. During this period few Native Americans received formal education beyond the high school level.

The quality of education provided at federal boarding schools of this era was highly criticized in the U.S. government–sponsored study now commonly referred to as the Meriam Report (Meriam, 1928), which served as an indictment of the federal government's assimilationist policies (Bill, 1987). The Meriam Report exposed the shocking and substandard conditions that existed within boarding schools and suggested that pre-adolescent Native children should no longer be sent to these schools. Vocational training provided for older students was also criticized for its irrelevance to the workplace and to the skills necessary for life on the reservations. It was recommended that education for Native children be provided within their home communities and that they incorporate elements of both White culture and the local Native language and culture.

Some educational reforms followed the release of the Meriam Report. Native enrollment in boarding schools did become less prevalent. However, the federal policy shift toward incorporation of Native languages and culture into the curriculum of Native schools was only short-lived. Curriculum planning would remain outside of the control of Native Americans themselves because entrenched negative attitudes of non-Native teachers and school administrators presented significant barriers to the enactment of the new policies.

Reflecting the limited impact of education reform efforts, the Meriam Report's criticisms were mirrored forty years later in what is commonly referred to as the Kennedy Report, *Indian Education Tragedy—A National Challenge* (U.S. Senate, 1969). High dropout rates, low academic achievement, and low self-esteem characterized Native American and Alaska Native students. The report indicated that "most schools serving American Indian and Alaska Native students had consistently belittled the students' cultural identity and integrity while systematically ignoring parental voices of concern and pleas for justice" (Pavel, Swisher, & Ward, 1995, p. 34). The limited accomplishments of Native American and Alaska Native students across elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education indicated that an externally imposed system and curricula developed by members of the dominant society did not address the educational needs of Native people (Lomawaima, 1995). It was time for Native people to determine the course of their own educational futures and take the lead in developing the mission, scope, and influence of their own curricula.

The civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s set the stage for Native American and Alaska Native voices to be heard. No longer

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would the assimilationist policies designed to eliminate indigenous cultures and beliefs be tolerated. No longer would low levels of educational attainment be accepted. Curricula emphasizing vocational training would not suffice for higher academic study. Native American and Alaska Native people had a long and proud history of self-education that would no longer be squelched. For the first time since the advent of White Europeans, Native American and Alaska Native people would have the opportunity to build an educational system that incorporated their values, needs, and visions of the future (The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1989).

Over time, increased control has been assumed over Native education policies, administration, and curriculum. Efforts of higher education institutions as well as tribal, state, and federal governments have resulted in increased enrollments of Native students. Passage of the Indian Self-Determination and Educational Assistance Act of 1975 led to the first large-scale participation of Native people in contemporary education. Perhaps the most significant step forward in higher education involved the passage of the Navajo Community College Act of 1970 and the Tribally Controlled Community College Assistance Act of 1978, which paved the way for the tribally controlled college movement.

Today there are thirty tribally controlled colleges that enroll nearly a quarter of all full-time equivalent Native American and Alaska Native students attending the 3,000 plus higher education institutions in America (U.S. Department of Education, 1998). While serving different tribes, the tribally controlled colleges have similar institutional missions that influence curriculum development. These include: (a) preserve, enhance, and promote tribal language and culture; (b) serve the economic development, human resource development, and community organization; and (c) provide academic programs for students seeking two-year and/or four-year degrees in addition to transfer courses.

CONTEMPORARY CURRICULUM PLANNING

The learning experience for Native American and Alaska Native students extends far beyond the formal curriculum of the classroom. Therefore, the following discussion will present curriculum planning as it exists within the broader context of higher education. Various approaches that have been advocated for increasing Native American and Alaska Native representation in higher education will be presented within the framework of three orientations: (a) changing the student to fit the curriculum, (b) creating culturally congruent curricula, and (c) empowering students and communities. These orientations are not mutually exclusive, but rather are based on different theoretical foundations that have significant and varying implications for curriculum planning for Native American and Alaska Native students.

Changing the Student to Fit the Curriculum

Early attempts at fostering Native American and Alaska Native success in higher education have focused on students adapting to the existing curriculum and to overall institutional expectations. Various authors have drawn attention to the mismatch that frequently exists between the culture of mainstream education institutions and Native communities (Deyhle, 1995; Henry & Pepper, 1990; Lipka & Ilutsik, 1995; Pipes, Westby, & Inglebret, 1993; Swisher, 1990). Native American and Alaska Native students are often confronted with institutional policies and curricular content and practices that are unfamiliar or even contradictory to what they have experienced in their home communities. To increase academic achievement, students have to learn the rules and dominant practices associated with a particular institutional culture as well as in receiving supplemental educational instruction and psychosocial support.

With this approach the student is expected to make the primary adjustments while standard cur-

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riculum planning is maintained. This framework can ease the demands put on faculty; however, it brings disadvantages. It relies on Native student assimilation to the dominant culture of the institution, giving little regard to the cultural background the student brings to the academic setting. In fact, Deyhle and Swisher (1997) point out that, consistent with cultural deficit theory, the cultural characteristics of the student are likely to be viewed as deficiencies that lead to failure in the educational process. They contrast this assimilationist perspective that omits the student's home culture from the curriculum with their review of related research indicating that "Native languages and cultures correlate positively with school success" (p. 136). Consequently, it behooves the educator to explore means for considering a Native student's cultural background during the curriculum planning process.

Content and Process of Creating Culturally Congruent Curricula

Content. Modification and extension of content provides one means for increasing the cultural congruence of curricula for Native American and Alaska Native students. Cummins (1994) and Lomawaima (1995) emphasize the importance of incorporating the cultural and linguistic background of Native students into the curriculum. Native American students attending universities have indicated that inclusion of cultural content in the core curriculum is "very important" to their academic success (Inglebret, 1991). When students do not see the concepts and contributions of their cultural groups reflected in coursework, a message is sent—educators do not value these concepts and contributions. This subtle, yet powerful, message can undermine attempts to increase participation of Native Americans and Alaska Natives in higher education.

In attempting to extend curricular content, it is typical for college and university faculty to first look to written documents for information. However, when striving to learn about Native culture, faculty are likely to encounter a paucity of accurate written resources (Mankiller, 1991). Native Americans and Alaska Natives have traditionally passed down information orally and only recently have used the written medium to record cultural information. Consequently, much of the literature available has been written by non-Natives who tend to portray Natives through the perspective of Western philosophies and values. This has resulted in significant discrepancies between the Native view of themselves as compared to their portrayal in books (fiction and nonfiction). Furthermore, much of the popular literature depicts Native American and Alaska Native people as a sort of monolithic, generic population (Geiogamah & Pavel, 1993). In reality, there are over 500 federally recognized tribal and Native groups in the United States that vary widely in worldviews, history, values, traditions, governance, and language (Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1991). Therefore, care must be taken in selecting written materials to ensure their accuracy, as well as relevance to a particular group of students.

In the spirit of sharing control over curricular content, it seems more appropriate to initially bypass this inclination toward the written word and to first listen to the concerns of Native people. Members of Native and tribal communities are in the best position to determine what content is most relevant for inclusion in the curriculum. Culturally congruent strategies can be used to learn about culture, such as observing and participating in tribal events and activities of the communities. According to Badwound (1991), "the most effective way to learn about tribal culture is to live among and interact with the tribal community" (p. 19). In this way an instructor can gain valuable insights into tribal views of what constitutes knowledge, dominant values and beliefs, and issues of particular relevance to the community. Crazy Bull (1997) further specifies that "oral histories about individuals, families, communities, events, and time periods are a remarkable source of information about tribal life. There are many solutions to our everyday problems in the stories of our elders" (p. 19). Further

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conceptual knowledge and understanding of underlying beliefs can be gained through becoming familiar with oral history dealing with the origin of a particular Native people (Srivastava, 1997).

As curricular content is determined, faculty also need to decide how the content will be included. This poses the challenge of where to center the curriculum. If separate courses are designed to cover cultural areas, this content can remain marginalized from the core of the curriculum. If Native cultural content is integrated in a comparative manner, there is a risk of perpetuating an "us" versus "them" mentality that views "we" as natural and "they" as exotic and strange (Schmitz, 1992). Butler and Schmitz (cited in Schmitz, 1992) recommend that we respond to these dilemmas by teaching from "multiple centers (traditions, perspectives, bodies of knowledge), rather than a single center. . . . Reflecting reality, these centers overlap: they represent the multiplicity of individuals and groups, shared heritag[illegible]d traditions, influences, borrowings, and legacies" (p. 65). Thus, different cultural groups become the central focus at specific times for specific topics.

Process. Just as curricular content contributes to cultural congruence for Native students, the process used to teach this content plays an important role in bridging the gap between institutional and home cultures. Deyhle and Swisher (1997) explain that early, culturally specific socialization patterns influence "the ways in which children learn to learn or approach learning" (p. 139). Native American students carry early-established learning patterns along with their underlying cultural ethics and values into the higher education realm. Awareness of the ethics and values in which the learning process is grounded can positively impact the postsecondary experience for these students.

Caring is central to education in Native communities and important in the process of planning and implementing curriculum. In her theory of moral development, Gilligan (1982) focuses on care as an essential element in relationships among people, and the ethic of care as developing along a continuum that reaches its highest level with the integration of responsibility for self with responsibility for others. Arvizu (1995) observed this ethic in the perspectives of both Native American educators and students. Pavel (1997) found caring to be essential in making higher education accessible to tribal college students. The importance of care within education for Native students cannot be overstated. There is a preponderance of evidence that indicates uncaring teachers and educational administrators were primary factors related to student dropout (Bowker, 1993; Deyhle, 1992; Swisher, Hoisch, & Pavel, 1991).

Caring behavior can take on a variety of forms within education. Deyhle and Swisher (1997) suggest that teachers who watch and listen to their Native students, as well as have high expectations for their achievement, are demonstrating caring behavior. Within tribal colleges, Pavel (1997) identifies sincerity and honesty as primary attributes of caring interactions with further recognition given to the encouraging, comforting, reassuring, and helpful nature of caring relationships. In recognizing the collective nature of tribal communities, care extends beyond the individual student to his/her family, as well as to the larger community. Care is also synonymous with a firm belief in the capacity of Native students to learn. As a result, caring faculty involve themselves, first, in taking the time to learn about cultural values and concepts and, second, in taking action to integrate these values and concepts into the educational process.

Moreover, through the ethic of care, faculty recognize Native students' cultural backgrounds as presenting strengths that can be used to enrich the learning experience for other students in the classroom. Two cultural concepts are highlighted here to demonstrate this assertion. First, Native communities often emphasize cooperation and sharing in both knowledge acquisition and in the demonstration of learning (Pease-Windy Boy, 1995; Swisher, 1990). Cooperative learning strategies have become increasingly popular in university classrooms with positive effects observed in relation to "critical thinking, self-esteem, racial and ethnic relations, and prosocial behavior"

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across groups of students (Cooper, Robinson, & McKinney, 1994, p. 78). Schmitz (1992) also contends that a collaborative mode of learning has served to decrease the distance inherent in faculty–student relationships and has given more responsibility to students for their own learning. As a second example, members of Native communities view life as a whole emphasizing the interconnections that exist among all things (Crazy Bull, 1997). This cultural concept has been translated into an interdisciplinary curricular emphasis (Pease-Windy Boy, 1995; Schmitz, 1992) that is now viewed as an asset for students grappling with the highly complex problems of today's rapidly changing world.

Cultural discontinuity theory can serve as the foundation for the curriculum development approach described in this section because it assumes that culturally based differences in the values of the Native American and Alaska Native students' home and the mainstream American culture of the school lead to "conflicts, misunderstandings, and ultimately, failure for those students" (Dehyle & Swisher, 1997, p. 162). Conversely, it is assumed that a better match between the home culture and the school culture will lead to increased academic success. While the creation of culturally congruent curricula can contribute to positive academic experiences for Native American and Alaska Native students, cultural matches or mismatches do not provide a sole explanation for either student persistence or for student dropout. Therefore, we must address additional dimensions of the educational process that intersect with cultural continuity in order to facilitate Native American and Alaska Native student achievement. One such dimension involves the power relationships existing within the contexts of classroom and community.

Empowering Students and Communities

Lomawaima (1995) portrays Native American education as "a 500-year-old battle for power" (p. 331). During the past half century the power to define education, to develop educational programs and policies, and to decide what constitutes research has predominantly resided outside of Native communities. This historic imbalance in power has perpetuated racism and discriminatory practices that have kept the voices of Native Americans and Alaska Natives out of the forefront in academic dialogue. Higher education curricula built on an ethic of care can play a key role in creating a more balanced power structure in our society. Underlying this focus on modification of power relationships is the theory of sociostructural conflict, which locates the cause of school dropout within the broader social structure of society (Ogbu, 1993). Oppressive practices are viewed as systematically embedded in everyday practices and, as such, must be unearthed and held up for scrutiny from the various participants. At the same time, new systems for daily functioning must be collaboratively built. This can be accomplished, at least in part, within the context of the classroom, as well as through the formation of linkages with tribal communities.

As a microcosm of society, the classroom can serve as a forum for challenging social inequalities that impact the lives of all who live in an interdependent world (Bell, 1997). Power relations that exist within teacher–student interactions can be made explicit as they interweave with those of other societal institutions. The power structure of the classroom can be transformed to recognize the capacity of students to assume both learning and teaching roles, while a parallel teacher/student role is assumed by the faculty member. Attention can be given to the role that various values and assumptions play in legitimizing certain types of knowledge, while delegitimizing others. The impact of membership in specific social identity groups can be made visible. Taken collectively, these strategies can serve to empower both Native and non-Native students in a manner that impacts the immediate educational process, as well as long-term participation in a democracy.

Community lies at the heart of traditional Native education. Therefore, as educators look to make strategic moves both addressing power imbalances and consistent with an ethic of care, their

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focus will move to the formation of linkages with tribal communities. These linkages will involve reciprocal relationships whereby universities become partners with tribal communities in building continuous progress curricula (Stiggins, 1997). These curricula will grow out of dialogue among the various stakeholders—students, families, tribal educators, tribal leaders, business people, and postsecondary educators—and will bring Native voices to the forefront in defining educational needs, in developing educational models for meeting these needs, and in evaluating the eventual outcomes of these efforts. Continuity will undergird these educational frameworks to ensure both a smooth transition between educational institutions and coordination of content and process across academic levels.

CONCLUSION

Curriculum development specific to Native Americans and Alaska Natives in higher education can be likened to a journey. The journey begins with Native peoples deciding the paths to be taken, the rivers to be crossed, and the mountains to be challenged as they strive to develop knowledge that promotes the well-being of their peoples. The course of the journey becomes radically altered with the advent of European Americans. Control over the route to education is removed from the hands of Native peoples with disastrous results.

Now we see another radical change in direction. Native peoples are once again playing a key role in defining their own educational landscapes and the directions for their journeys; however, this time the journey constantly intersects with that of many other peoples from widely varying backgrounds. The educational journey can no longer take place in isolation. As the paths of these peoples join, part, and join once again, there is a need for an ethic of care. As a nation, we must strive to build caring relationships among peoples that promote understanding and respect for each other's perspectives, in recognition that the quality of our lives and of our educational journeys have become highly interdependent. Only when we attend to the needs of all who journey with us will we be able to build a country that exemplifies the principles of democracy and meets the demands of the complex social, economic, and political issues we now confront on a daily basis. The curricula we develop in higher education can play a crucial role in directing us toward these ideals.

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QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How can concepts from Native students' cultural backgrounds be used to enrich higher education curricula for *all* students?
2. What do the authors mean when they state that "community lies at the heart of traditional Native education"? What would be the distinguishing elements of a higher education curriculum based on this view of community?
3. In what ways can education (at any level) be likened to a journey?